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ARTIFICIAL SELECTION AND THE MARRIAGE PROBLEM.*

BY artificial selection I mean all conscious and purposive arrangements between men and women which have in view character of offspring. This is opposed to natural selection which is merely instinctive unteleological union with one of the opposite sex as impelled by animal passion or romantic love. All sexual union among the lower animals is by natural selection ; they do not forecast consequences, and by conforming to known laws determine consequences. Among the lower races of men natural selection is the sole or at least dominant factor in marital matters, but as civilisation advances artificial selection becomes a more and more powerful element. A truly thoughtful and intelligent man in our day in view of marriage will most carefully consider his own life history and that of his parents and ancestors, and also that of his intended partner and her ancestors, as to physical or mental disease, which might be handed down to the issue of the proposed union. He

*In an article in *The Arena* for June, 1890, I endeavored to plainly set forth the renewal of society from its lowest elements as the greatest disease in our social life, and to show that the remedy lies in a thorough application of science to human breeding. Just how this application was to be made I did not state, for I did not include this in the scope of my discussion. Mr. Stead in his *Review of Reviews* for July, 1890, and Mr. Wallace in the September *Fortnightly Review* and October *Popular Science Monthly*, 1890, have drawn inferences on this point which I am not prepared to allow. Mr. Stead speaks in headlines and in text of "murder, mutilation, or imprisonment" as the methods which I hint at, and Mr. Wallace remarks upon my views "that such interference with personal freedom in matters so deeply affecting individual happiness will never be adopted by the majority of any nation, or if adopted would never be submitted to by the minority without a life-and-death struggle." It seems incumbent then on me to state more clearly what I understand by artificial selection, and what forms of it are most expedient at the present time.

would not, for instance, marry into a family which has a tendency to consumption or insanity, for this would be a crime against his possible descendants. Further, this growth of artificial selection with the progress of society is manifest not only as regards individual action but by state regulation. Even in barbarous states it soon becomes evident to the leaders that if strong healthy men are to be had to defend and maintain the nation, strict attention must be paid to the character of those who marry. In Sparta and other ancient states this principle was recognised, and modern governments seek in many more or less indirect ways to encourage marriage between the most fit, so that good citizens and warriors may be raised up to serve the state. All this regulation of marriage by either individual or state action which looks to the character of offspring I term artificial selection.

In the evolution of man as a rational animal artificial selection will more and more prevail, and human breeding will become a well defined art. Man is always artificial,* and it is his goal to become in all his life unnatural and thoroughly artful. There can ultimately be no *laissez-faire* policy as to marriage or any other institution. The history of marriage is the history of the gradual retirement of natural selection; but art has come in here more slowly than in other relations of life owing to tremendous conservatism and the power of human passion. But the time has now come when man must more than ever before attend by artificial selection—that is, purposed care—to the perpetuation of the species in the line of its true advancement, spiritual achievement. I do not now see how the necessity of artificial selection can be gainsaid by any one who takes a broad view of the evolution of the race.

The methods of artificial selection are either negative, which restrain the unfit from propagating, or positive, which encourage the fit to propagate. The most radical negative method is mutilation, and is employed by man with the lower animals and with slaves, but this plan could hardly be used by civilised society

* By artificial I understand not what is unnatural or against nature but that which is after conscious deliberation more in accord with the laws of nature. It is a higher degree of the natural.

for human breeding. Imprisonment temporarily restrains some classes of society from perpetuating themselves. Prevention of conception is at present mostly a voluntary means, but accomplishes the elimination of both fit and unfit. Celibacy of monk and nun, of bachelor and maid, works also in both directions. In many indirect ways society discourages from marriage those whom it supposes to be unfit as tested by wealth, rank, or birth.

It is not, however, so much by the extension of any negative methods, but rather by positive means that artificial selection may be best employed. I will mention three forms by which human breeding might be materially advanced.

By common law and custom the wife surrenders herself physically to submit and morally to obey the husband. This is not for the most part harshly and literally carried out in civilised countries ; still there is a vast deal of oppression which is hidden from all eyes, and which is often passively received by women as her rightful lot. This again is a subject upon which delicacy—perhaps unwise—forbids free discussion, but its bearing is manifest. If women have the choice to bear or not to bear, and she with educated conscience choose by fitness of offspring, a large and powerful element of artificial selection may be introduced. Again all governments have laws concerning marriage which act in general toward encouraging the fit. Certain conditions as to age, etc., being fulfilled, the state grants a marriage licence, and public opinion might easily be led to make the requirements more stringent. As a physician has suggested to me a certificate of health from an approved medical examiner might be required of all applicants for legal marriage. This would certainly be a strong measure of artificial selection, and would save much misery springing from ignorance and vice. It surely seems scarcely fitting that those who cannot pass an examination for life insurance freely contract marriage with view to issue.

But the plan of artificial selection which seems to me most feasible at the present time would be voluntary associations of men and women who bind themselves to learn and apply the laws of heredity in their marriage relations, to seek for expert guidance, and in all their life to live not merely purely, but according to reason and

science. Heredity societies of this stamp which should favor marriages only between members would ultimately become a rational aristocracy, and true and good blood would be perpetuated in the best manner. There is much, indeed, to be done in the science of heredity, especially as regards laws of transmission of mental and moral qualities,* but still we have even now a sufficient basis of knowledge to make the experiment well worth trying.

Many objections can be raised to such schemes. For instance, it will be said that they might assure us of obtaining men of talent, but we should forever lose men of genius. If such societies were in vogue in the Elizabethan period, we might never have had a Shakespeare. What likelihood that a scientific expert would advise the marriage of John Shakespere and Mary Arden! I answer that we should have had a dozen Shakesperes instead of one. The law of the production of geniuses is not beyond human ken. Maud S. is truly a genius in horseflesh, but she came into the world in no fortuitous or instinctive way, but by scientific breeding. The applicability of similar foresight in breeding men would produce geniuses in abundance. It may not be accomplished in an exactly analogous manner, an expert leading around eminent men to "make the season," but the analogous practical results will nevertheless be obtained.

Another objection which might be urged is that any such scheme would seriously diminish population. True; but what thoughtful man applies the numerical test to the progress of the race! It is not quantity of citizens but quality, which constitutes the true greatness of states. The counting of heads instead of what is in heads, is a mistake into which democracies are peculiarly apt to fall. Were all men exactly equal a census would be a true test, but considering the tremendous inequalities in humanity it is sheer folly for a country to glory in the number of its adherents, or a sect in the number of its adherents, or a city in the number of its citizens. Civilisations are weighed down and ultimately crushed by the dead weight of the masses. The barbarian is not without but within the civilisation. By recent inquiries in New York and Chicago the slums appear to

* See my remarks on this point in *Nature*, Oct. 31, 1889.

be five times as prolific as the most aristocratic portions ; and while good may come from the lowest born, and bad from the highest born, still the chances are decidedly in favor of the high born. A few rise above the level of their birth, a few sink below it, but the great majority of men remain for their lives on the general level of society in which they were born. The United States would be a greater nation with 10,000,000 choice inhabitants than with ten times 10,000,000 of the ill bred and low bred. Athens by the vulgar test of numbers was but a small and mean city, but in true greatness as revealed in far reaching spiritual power, she stands in the very forefront.

Again it will be objected that scientific schemes for human breeding would inevitably destroy that beautiful flower of Christian civilisation, the poetry and romance of love. Sentiment and chivalry would wither, and brutality and cold calculation would supplant all tender and refined emotion. I should answer that the true refinement which refuses to obtrude the things of sense, and true purity which refuses to dwell on them salaciously, are perfectly compatible with the fullest knowledge and the consequent action. Lubricity breeds best upon a half knowledge acquired in dubious ways. A serious practical scientific treatment of this subject will not glorify the flesh with the fierce gusto of Walt Whitman, nor, with the Zola school, dwell upon animalism with the morbid detail of a heated imagination ; but it will bring into the clearest light the laws of sex and the rules for the development of the human race into the perfect man. These laws of nature, which science reveals, are laws of duty and laws of God, and when once appropriated as such by Ethics and Religion, they will become the basis for all that is high in emotion and chivalrous in action.

In that most vital of matters, human breeding, man is far behind his progress in all other spheres of action ; but here as elsewhere Science must enter, not to destroy but to fulfil, to build up manhood and womanhood into the perfected relations which can only come from rational action, illuminated by complete knowledge, and sanctioned by noblest sentiment.

HIRAM M. STANLEY.